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EXAMINER

DURAN, ARTHUR D

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3622

DATE MAILED: 07/07/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/991,512

Applicant(s)

WILLERS ET AL.

Examiner

Arthur Duran

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MW

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 November 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

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DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1-30 have been examined.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. Claim 30 recites the limitation "personalized dynamically variable virtual network". Claim 30 is dependent upon claim 26. None of the prior claims disclose any "personalized dynamically variable virtual network" nor any of the words "personalized" or "dynamically" or "variable" or "virtual". Hence, there is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation of a "personalized dynamically variable virtual network" in the claim 30. Correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1-30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gerace (5,848,96) in view of Angles (5,933,811) in view of Nason (6,630,943).

Claim 1, 11, 19, 20: Gerace discloses a method, medium, system of providing a system for selective communication of promotional information among a plurality of sponsors and a plurality of users over a computer network comprising the acts of:

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- a) enrolling a plurality of sponsors, the act of enrolling each sponsor comprising the act of assigning the sponsor with at least one group of customization parameters which are sufficient to uniquely define the look and feel of a value portal skin (col 2, line 60-col, lines 10; col 6, lines 22-40; col 20, lines 10-25; col 18, lines 26-30);
- b) providing a sponsor server information in computer useable form to at least one of the plurality of sponsors (col 18, lines 26-35), wherein the sponsor server software executing on a sponsor server comprises functionality for communicating messages with a client software on a user's computer over the computer network according to a special communication protocol (col 7, lines 47-56; col 7, lines 60-65; col 9, lines 39-45);
- c) providing the client information to a plurality of users in machine useable form (col 13, lines 35-40; col 6, lines 22-35), each of said plurality of users having a user's computer capable of using the client software and having access to the computer network, wherein each user's computer operates under an operating system having a graphical user interface (col 6, lines 12-22; col 3, lines 39-54; Fig. 1), and wherein the client software when executing on a user's computer comprises:
 - i) functionality for installing a value portal on the user's computer, the look and feel of the value portal capable of being defined by any of the unique group of customization parameters defining a value portal skin which have been assigned to each of the plurality of categories (col 11, lines 24-56; col 6, lines 23-40),
 - ii) functionality for providing access to a plurality of additional utilitarian application programs through said value portal (col 1, lines 10-14; col 2, line 60-col 3, line 3; col 22, lines 10-25),

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- iii) a system database capable of storing a plurality of groups of customization parameters, said system database comprising at least one group of customization parameters therein corresponding to at least one sponsor of said plurality of sponsors (col 19, lines 18-31; col 20, lines 19-25; col 11, lines 24-56; col 6, lines 23-40),
- iv) functionality for choosing which group of customization parameters from the plurality of groups of customization parameters in the system database will be used to define the look and feel of the value portal (col 12, lines 49-56; col 20, lines 10-19; col 11, lines 24-56; col 6, lines 23-40),
- v) functionality for exchanging messages with at least one sponsor through communication with a sponsor server operated by the sponsor server software, according to the special communication protocol (col 7, lines 47-56; col 7, lines 60-65; col 9, lines 39-45),
- vi) functionality for displaying messages on the value portal (col 7, lines 47-56; col 7, lines 60-65; col 9, lines 39-45), and
- vii) functionality for registering a user (col 4, lines 55-65) with a sponsor server (col 14, lines 30-36; col 22, lines 15-20; col 11, lines 24-56; col 6, lines 23-40) and executing the sponsor software (col 18, lines 1-10).

Gerace further discloses software on the client and software on the sponsor server (col 1, lines 47-50; col 18, lines 26-30).

Gerace further discloses multiple sponsors (col 14, lines 30-36; col 22, lines 15-20; col 18, lines 25-30). Gerace further discloses multiple categories of content (col 6, lines 27-35), multiple content providers (col 1, lines 14-30), and that a content provider can be a sponsor or a provider of content or a provider of advertising (col 2, lines 62-66).

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Therefore, Gerace implies that there are multiple content provider sponsors such that different categories of content can be supplied by different sponsors.

Gerace does not explicitly disclose that there are multiple content provider sponsors such that different categories of content can be supplied by different sponsors.

Gerace does not explicitly disclose that the software can be run locally or on the client.

Gerace does not explicitly disclose that the sponsor can run sponsor software on the server.

However, Angles discloses that there are multiple content provider sponsors such that different categories of content can be supplied by different sponsors (Fig. 2).

Angles further discloses that the software can be run locally or on the client (col 3, lines 24-29; Fig. 11, item 12) and that client run software can be faster (col 12, lines 2-11).

Angles further discloses that the sponsor can run sponsor software on the server (col 12, lines 40-50).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to add Angles special software located on the client or on the sponsor server to Gerace's user with software or sponsor with software. One would have been motivated to do this in order to allow greater flexibility and performance in various hardware and software configurations.

Gerace further discloses that numerous aspects of presentation and format of the user interface can be controlled and optimized (col 6, lines 13-21; col 5, lines 19-26).

Gerace does not explicitly disclose that the user interface can utilize a task bar.

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However, Nason discloses the utilization of a customized portal (col 17, lines 5-13; col 17, lines 35-38; col 17, line 65-col 18, line 29) and the utilization of a task bar (Fig. 15; col 4, lines 45-50)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to add Nason's task bar to Gerace's customizable interface. One would have been motivated to do this in order to provide further customization with an interface format that many users are familiar with and find convenient.

Claim 2, 21: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the method, system of claim 1, 21. Gerace further discloses that the act of providing at least one authentication server operating with an authentication server software accessible to the computer network, said authentication server being capable of authenticating a communication between one of said plurality of user's computers operating the client software and a sponsor server operating the sponsor server software communicating according to the special communication protocol (col 18, lines 35-40; col 13, lines 60-65; col 17, lines 17-25).

Claim 3, 4, 12, 13, 24: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the system, medium, system of claim 2, 11, 23. Gerace further discloses that the plurality of additional utilitarian programs are accessible only when the client software program is operating (col 4, lines 55-60), and the functionality of the plurality of utilitarian programs is invariant to selection of which group of customization parameters defines the look and feel of a value portal or the value portal skin (col 1, lines 10-14; col 2, line 60-col 3, line 3; col 22, lines 10-25).

Gerace further implies that regular use of the client software is encouraged (col 4, lines 25-30; col 4, lines 15-18).

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Therefore, it would be obvious to Gerace to encourage the user to utilize the system. Gerace would be motivated to do this in order to better profile a user because the more a user utilizes the system the better the user can be profiled.

Claim 5, 14: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the method, medium of claim 4, 13. Gerace further discloses that the client software further comprises functionality for periodically accessing at least one sponsor server to obtain messages according to the special communication protocol (col 7, lines 47-56; col 7, lines 60-65; col 9, lines 39-45).

Claim 6, 15, 25: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the method, medium, system of claim 5, 14, 24. Gerace further discloses that the client software further comprises functionality for optionally updating the client software program and system database on a user's computer during a communication according to the special message protocol (col 13, lines 36-46; col 13, lines 62-col 14, line 4).

Gerace further discloses that the communication session is with a sponsor server (col 13, lines 60-65).

Claim 7, 8, 16, 17, 27, 28: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the method, medium, system of claim 6, 15, 25.

Gerace further discloses that numerous aspects of presentation and format of the user interface can be controlled and optimized (col 6, lines 13-21; col 5, lines 19-26).

Gerace does not explicitly disclose that the value portal is installed overlaying the task bar on the graphical user interface, or that the value portal is installed adjacent to the task bar on the graphical user interface.

However, Nason discloses the utilization of a widely customized portal in terms of format presentation and the utilization of a task bar (Fig. 15; Fig. 3; Figs 16-21; col 4, lines 45-50; col 17, lines 5-13; col 17, lines 35-38; col 17, line 65-col 18, line 29))

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to add Nason's task bar to Gerace's customizable interface. One would have been motivated to do this in order to provide further customization with an interface format that many users are familiar with and find convenient.

Claim 9, 18, 29: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the method, medium, system of claim 6, 15, 25. Gerace further discloses that the client software launches an application program with the value portal included thereon (col 22, lines 5-25; col 36, lines 54-59).

Claim 10, 26, 30: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the method, system of claim 6, 25. Gerace further discloses that the client software, the sponsor server software, and the special message protocol contain functionality to enable a first user to exchange a message with a second user through a common sponsor server which both the first user and the second user periodically exchange messages (col 10, lines 25-39).

Gerace further discloses utilizing the special communications protocol (col 1, lines 44-48).

Claim 22: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the system of claim 21 wherein the computer network is the Internet (col 3, lines 50-53).

Claim 23: Gerace, Angles, and Nason disclose the system of claim 22. Gerace further discloses that the at least one sponsor server comprises a plurality of sponsor servers which are each operated by at least one sponsor (Fig. 1; col 1, lines 45-49; col 3, lines 48-49).

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Conclusion

The following prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure:

a. Dedrick (5,724,521) discloses multiple sponsors and customizing content format to a user.

b. Sheldon (6,072,486) discloses a highly customizable taskbar.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Arthur Duran whose telephone number is (703)305-4687. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon- Fri, 7:30-4:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eric Stamber can be reached on (703)305-8469. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Arthur Duran
Patent Examiner
6/29/04